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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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One of the great things about being an online magazine is the fact that we reach people all over the world. Through A-ONE, as well as other venues, we've "met" many people across the globe. As such, I've come into contact with many people in Great Britain; we have many readers there, including the London area. I hope that everyone that we know in the London area are safe and well after that horrific attack on the innocent people of the city. I cannot express in words my thoughts regarding these cowardly acts by a bunch of extremists. These acts will only continue to strengthen our resolve to remain steadfast and supportive of each other. We here at A-ONE send our thoughts and prayers to the people of Great Britain, as you did in our time of need.

On a lighter note, I hope that everyone enjoyed their long 4th of July holiday weekend. I know that we had a great time. Great weather, as usual. We took part in our annual neighborhood block party. Plenty of food, drink, friends, and entertainment again this year. Otherwise, it's been a quiet week. We're enjoying a nice quiet vacation so far, and will continue to relax. We really need the time away. So, I'll keep it short this week, and kick back and relax another great weekend.

Until next time...

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Atari++ 1.42 Stable

Hi folks,

a new release of the Atari++ emulator for Linux and Win32 is
available for download at its home page:

http://www.math.tu-berlin.de/~›thor/atari++/

This makes again a new stable release (it's been time, the
old stable was rather outdated).

So what’s new this time:

- Fixed race condition when switching the resolution, could cause crashes.
- Fixed Antic CHARBASE switches, did not keep care of horizontal scrolling correctly.
- Fixed leaking key presses from the GUI to the core.
- Fixed PIA Port A handling, Port A input is non-buffered.
- Fixed Monitor backspace key on some broken ncurses implementations.
- Added "graphical" single-step trace command for the monitor.
- History of the monitor is now a tad smarter and buffers un-finished lines.
- Fixed "dummy writes" for INC and DEC commands.
- Fixed player horizontal split, did erroneously remove the old player.
- Fixed timing of the pokey timers, should be more precise now.
- Fixed XIO for serial baud generator, argument zero leaves baud rate alone.
- Fixed serial input counter for concurrent mode
- Fixed state parser, is now less sensitive to CF/LF vs. LF confusion.

I especially want to thank Don Fanning and Sebastian Pachuta for their time reporting a couple of bugs in the 1.41 release. I hope they’re more or less fixed in the 1.42 by now. Thanks, folks!

So long,
Thomas

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING

compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Before we get started, let me just say that our thoughts and prayers go out to the city and people of London. As I write this, there isn’t that much concrete information, but it’s clear that there has been a coordinated effort to cause massive damage and terror.

No, it may not compare with The Blitz, but any destruction of this type is something to be avoided and condemned. It pains me that there are those among us... on both sides of the argument, evidently... that believe that these sorts of tactics are not only effective, but necessary.

Take, for instance, the Department of Defense’s plan to close a bunch of military bases throughout the U.S.

The way I see it, there are two possibilities: Either the DOD decided early-on which bases would be closed and threw in a bunch of others to give cities and states something to wrangle over until the DOD finally "gives in" and ends up 'only' closing the ones they intended to close in the first place, OR the DOD is getting ready for a different kind of defense... a defense composed of fewer 'surgical strikes' and more 'blunt-force trauma'. I mean, c'mon, close Walter Reed Army Hospital and "The Submarine Capitol of the World"? I don't think so. It sounds like de-evolution to me. Or for any Fundamentalists out there, Un-Intelligent Design.

Again, our friends and families send our thoughts and well-wishes to all of our friends in Great Britain. I still remember the thoughts expressed by our British friends in the days after the terrorist attack on New York City, and the thoughts and wishes expressed by them have always been important to me, and it pains me now that they need the same thoughts and well-wishes.

Let's get to the news, hints, tips and info available from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

Mark Bedingfield asks for help in locating a particular boot/config program:

"I am looking for a program called booter, written by Holger Janz. Anyone have to hand? It is a MegaSTE configuration type program, and can execute a floppy boot sector. Ideal for running games at 16mhz, hopefully it can set the floppy seek rate too. I need to play Millennium 2.2 again!"

Steve Sweet tells Mark:

"Floppy boot sectors don't need extra software in order to be able to execute if they are executable software, they do it all on their own."

Coda tells Steve:

"The point he is making is that at reset the MSTe defaults to 8mhz, which then is what you're stuck at. With Booter you can set 16mhz, then boot the game."

Steve replies:

"Hm!, I had that dilemma with my machine, I wrote a bootsector to sort that, in fact I wrote a few, or rather customised it to set screen res and boot speed and cache and other stuff.

What's the chances of my finding it, I wonder?

Hey as I recall isn't that one of the many features of NoRoach??"

Pera Putnik asks about ST/PC floppy conversion:

"Is there any really good program to transfer Atari ST floppies to PC? Forget Image and STimage - they don’t work with 20 Sector/track formats.

Wfdcopy is even worse - in XP can handle 10 Sector/track. Ignore errors is solved total false....

Best is probably Makedisk, but still not perfect....

Any suggestions? Any source codes for improvement - but only DOS programs (Win is crappy for such task)?"

Edward Baiz asks Pera:

"Are they already formatted floppies? If you have a ST with TOS 1.4 or above, floppies formatted in the ST can be read on a PC. There are programs that will format floppies in the older Atari’s that put a PC sector on the disk."

’Alison’ adds:

"parcp might help, is also DOS, ST and UNIX based; http://joy.sophics.cz/parcp/ it’s practical and ultra reliable!!

The easiest way might be to use PARCP (parallel cable copy) to transfer the files over. I’m assuming you’re talking about getting standard unprotected files over rather than imaging entire disks to .ST or .MSA archives.

Have a setup here which connects the PC and ST parallel ports full time. If files need to be transferred, just fire up the server end on the ST, and the client on the PC.

I still don’t believe what anyone says about TOS disks being entirely DOS compatible (not wanting to start a debate war here..), Windoze seems obsessed with wanting to format most of them, usually ok but sometimes screws up the FAT. Also stops you using custom ST formatting programs for 10 sectors etc. ...coverdisks and alike.

Best way again seems to be to use the ST for what it’s intended ..reading ST formatted disks. PARCP bridges the gap perfectly, and even runs on Linux too.

Here’s the link for parcp; http://joy.sophics.cz/parcp/ . The guy is still contactable via email and accepting shareware registrations. He also sells the custom cables which crossover at pins 1 and 11, with 12 thru 17 NC.

Please don’t register online, drop him a mail, as I’ve learned that the hosting company takes 25% of anything he makes, and even takes VAT too!! I still believe in shareware here when it’s well justified.

Hope this helps. I may be wrong and way off here but parallel transfer seems to make fiddling about with disks a long gone nightmare. Can easily download ST stuff from the various ftp sites to the PC, parcp over to the ST ramdisk, and play away. Also have the bulk of my ST disks backed up onto CD for immediate recovery.

Have been getting into this a bit lately so all still fresh in my mind."

'Simon' adds his own thoughts:

"Use a real ST, with MSAII, and link it to your PC thru the serial port, with Ghostlink (GHOSTLNK.ZIP IIRC).

You'll see your PC drives as ST drives, so the transfer can't be easier. You'll have time to drink a coffee, though, while the disk is being copied to the PC."

'Phantom' adds:

"It depends on what you want to do with the disks.

By transfer, do you just want to copy ST disks to the PC hard drive and have the programs listed on the hard drive as they were on the ST Floppy?

Or do you want to use the ST disks in a PC drive for use with a ST Emulator. And or just to copy files over between systems?

Or are you wanting to transfer ST disks to the PC hard drive into some type of Image file that has all the programs and etc of the ST disk?

There are a lot of different software and hardware made over the years to transfer ST disks or files to the PC.

Which way is best, really depends on what you want to do with the ST software. And or the ST Disks.

Also, the type of ST software, Original ST programs that may have protection, ST disks that have just one Program or Game that may not be listed in a directory normally; ST Disks with applications and games or utilities and etc that aren't protected and can be listed normally in a directory.

If you just want to make backup Disk Images, then the above isn't that important except for disks that have copy protection.

Also some ST software of the Net and on normal ST Disks have been placed on disks with Menus, especially games.
Most of these types of games have been cracked/hacked and have non-standard was to load up the games. (The Menu Type).

In my experience, these can be hard to read by a PC drive. It has something to do with the way the Menu looks to the PC as a lot of them mess with the boot sectors.

If you give us a little more info on what type of ST disk software and what you want to do with it, then someone or maybe myself can suggest a good method to handle them."

Coda tells Phantom:

"I use MSA on the Falcon to create the images , then I burn em onto CD."

Phantom replies:

"Yep, thats a good way to do it.

Ya know, I have a ST Disk Library Here with 2 or 3 thousand ST disks that have ST Software backed up in the MSA format. Some are in ARC or LZH format. But most are complete disk Images.

I've went thru some of them and this type of MSA Image Backup does seem to hold up fairly well.

A lot are games and are labeled. Some are utilities and Doc disks. And some I have no idea until I use MSA or similar on them as they aren't labeled.

There are plenty enough for a good 2 or 3 CDs full if I could find the time to copy the MSA IMAGEs over to CD. Another project on the waiting list.

I do wish any one with a PC who are usings ST images without some type of ST would at least try and get a 1040STe. Although they can be a bit hard to find it seems."

Joseph Place posts this about his <drum roll, please> SILENT STe!

"I have accomplished booting from compact flash with my 1040STe. The hardware I am using is as follows:

ICD Link II, Apple CD-ROM, Microtech Digital Photoalbum P, PCMCIA adaptor for compact flash, 64 MB compact flash. The Apple CD-ROM provides termination power for the Link II. I am booting with ICD Pro drivers, although HDdriver may be a better solution. I haven't tried it yet. The one thing I "tweeked" - I set retries to 4 in the driver. This setup is totally silent, and surprisingly fast. Only time will tell how reliable it will be.

This also provides me with a silent 130XE, as I use 800XL DeeJay software on the STe with an SIO2PC cable to serve files and programs to my 130XE.

Update: The CD-ROM is not need. The Microtech Digital Photoalbum P provides termination power!"

Steve Sweet tells Joseph:

"Sweet!! Gonna post any details?"

Joseph tells Steve:

"What else would you like to know? It's working great, just like a hard drive, but silent. The Microtech Digital Photoalbum P card reader is the single slot variety, accepting type II or III pcmcia cards. It's an external device. I can eventually put a picture on my website. I was surprised to find that the card reader even

provides termination power to the Link II, so you don't need any other SCSI devices attached. The reader itself fits in the palm of your hand, so it would be a great option for carrying your data with you to try on other systems. I also tested the reader on my Falcon with HDDriver, and it worked great there as well."

Lonny Pursell adds:

"I have one of those units on my TT as well as a dual reader. Both can be spotted in the pictures on my web site (http://www.bright.net/~gfabasic/) if one looks _really_ hard. The dual unit is above the mountain dew can and the 'Microtech Digital Photoalbum' is just to the right of the large 7 disk CD changer."

Well folks, that's it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Fear of Spyware Changing Online Habits

Internet users worried about spyware and adware are shunning specific Web sites, avoiding file-sharing networks, even switching browsers.

Many have also stopped opening e-mail attachments without first making sure they are safe, the Pew Internet and American Life Project said in a study issued Wednesday.

"People are scaling back on some Internet activities," said Susannah Fox, the study's main author. "People are feeling less adventurous, less free to do whatever they want to do online."

Like no other Internet threat before it, spyware is getting people's attention, she said. "It maybe will bring more awareness of all kinds of security issues."

Linda Parra, a technology usability consultant at an insurance firm in Madison, Wisc., is typical of the once-burned, now-vigilant crowd.

Hit twice by spyware, after which all her Internet searches went to a rogue search engine rather than Google, she bought the safer Mac computer, installed two layers of firewalls and began switching off her broadband-connected machine when she's out.

"I’ve become a lot more security conscious," she said, adding that she had to learn much more about how computers and the Internet work.

Parra also banned her daughters, ages 12 and 14, from game sites.

"All it takes is one click ... and you can end up going somewhere you don’t want to go and getting a little bonus pack (spyware) with your freebie," she said. "I believe that’s what happened."

According to Pew, 48 percent of adult Internet users in the United States have stopped visiting specific Web sites that they fear might be harboring unwanted programs.

Twenty-five percent stopped using file-sharing software, which often comes bundled with programs to display ads that subsidize its development. Rogue programs can also disguise themselves as songs or movie files awaiting download on file-sharing networks.

Eighteen percent of U.S. adult Internet users have started using Mozilla Firefox or another alternative Web browser. Many unwanted programs sneak in through security flaws in the dominant browser on Windows computers, Microsoft Corp.’s Internet Explorer.

In addition, 81 percent have become more cautious about e-mail attachments, a common way for spreading viruses, though rare for spyware or adware.

All told, 91 percent have made at least one behavioral change.

Users hit by spyware or adware were more likely than others to change their habits.

Avi Naider, president of adware company WhenU.com Inc., said he’s not surprised.

Although in theory, adware is about exchanging value for value - free software for ads - in practice, some in the industry engage in deceptive practices and alienate consumers such that they "just stop visiting Web sites," Naider said.

Although many users have changed their online habits, they haven’t necessarily fixed their machines, even as infected computers slow, often to a crawl.

Twenty percent of users who had computer problems did not attempt a fix. Among those who did, 29 percent waited a month or longer.

Two in five who tried to fix their machines did so on their own while others needed help from a friend, family member or a professional repair shop. In 20 percent of cases, the problem couldn’t be fixed.

The survey also found that 43 percent of Internet users say they’ve been hit with spyware, adware or both. Those who report spyware were more likely to have previously engaged in "risky" behavior such as playing online games and visiting adult sites. Broadband users tend to be at greater risk.

Pew also found that three-quarters of Internet users do not always read user agreements and other disclaimers where spyware and adware are sometimes disclosed.

The study was based on random telephone-based interviews with 2,001 adult Americans conducted May 4 to June 7. It has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.

Phishing Attacks Reach All-Time High

The number of e-mails seeking to lure users into phishing scams hit its highest level so far in May, according to IBM's monthly Global Business Security Index. According to the report, phishing attacks were up by a whopping 226 percent in May.

The rise of the use of "zombie botnets" - networks of infected computers used to send spam and ill-intentioned e-mail - is responsible for the big jump in the numbers of phishing e-mail, said IBM.

Through the use of these networks, the senders of malicious e-mail can increase the volume they can send without the knowledge of the owners of the computers being used.

The world of phishing has changed, said senior technology consultant Graham Cluley of computer security firm Sophos. Increasingly, the people who send e-mail laden with malicious packages are involved in criminal gangs that are reaping enormous financial benefit from the security breaches they exploit.

In addition, the phishing e-mails themselves are getting more sophisticated in the language and tactics they employ.

Instead of simply saying "click here," many of these phishing e-mails present a problem to the recipient: A user account will be closed without action, for example, or a problem with a shipment has been encountered.

Believing they are responding to legitimate business correspondence, many users naively release their sensitive financial data, such as bank account numbers or credit card information, in response to such messages.

In addition to phishing scams, an increasing number of e-mails are bearing attached viruses, found IBM. In May, over 30 percent of all e-mails contained some sort of virus. Cluley noted that a huge percentage of personal computer users do not update their virus protection software frequently and thus fall prey to e-mail viruses unnecessarily.

Spam, however, stayed fairly level in May. Although it accounted for nearly 70 percent of inbound e-mail traffic, it did not experience a significant jump in volume.

Sasser Computer Worm Author Confesses in Trial

The man on trial for writing the Sasser computer worm which wreaked havoc in big businesses and homes across the world last year has confessed to all the charges against him, a German court said on Tuesday.

Katharina Kruetzfeldt, judge at the court in the western town of Verden, said Sven Jaschan, 19, admitted to data manipulation, computer sabotage and

interfering with public corporations in one of the biggest Internet attacks of its kind.

After emerging around May last year, versions of the Sasser worm went on to knock out an estimated one million computer systems among home users and companies by spreading on the ubiquitous Microsoft Windows operating system.

Sasser victims ranged from the British Coastguard to the European Commission, Goldman Sachs and Australia’s Westpac Bank. Some security firms called it the most destructive worm ever.

State prosecutor Silke Streichsbier said she was "highly satisfied" with progress made at the trial, which is closed to the public as Jaschan was still a minor when some of the offences took place. A verdict is expected on Thursday.

Jaschan, who had previously confessed to having created the worm to police, could face a maximum sentence of five years in prison as well as having to pay compensation to his victims.

Prosecutors said damages amounting to some 130,000 euros ($154,600) had so far been reported by victims of the worm, but the figure could spiral into millions if everyone affected worldwide were to report financial losses caused by the worm.

How the 19-year-old was expected to pay such compensation was not immediately clear.

Jaschan, described by authorities as a "computer freak," was identified as the author after Microsoft offered a reward of $250,000 for information leading to his arrest.

It is believed he began creating programs, including the Netsky virus, to seek out and destroy other viruses.

States Pushing For Web Sales-Tax Collection

Momentum is building for level sales taxes on Internet retail purchases, as 18 states prepare to nudge online retailers to collect taxes on items purchased over the Web.

In the wake of a meeting of the Streamlined Sales Tax Project (SSTP) in Chicago last week, tax representatives from states participating in the effort have been encouraging retailers to collect sales taxes.

"This is still all-voluntary," said Dick Eppleman of tax software supplier Vertex. "There is still no mandate to collect taxes on remote sales whether they are for the Internet or for catalog sales. But it’s a big step along a long road."

Some 40 states have been meeting since 2000 in an effort to hammer out an agreement to create some semblance of uniformity in the collection of sales taxes on remote sales, particularly sales across state lines. The decision of 12 states to create a uniform approach to the collection of taxes is considered something of a breakthrough.

The states comprising the leadership of the SSTP, which are working towards sales tax uniformity are: Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, Nebraska, Oklahoma, South Dakota and West Virginia with New Jersey in the process of joining that group. Associate members close to participating are Arkansas, North Dakota, Ohio, Tennessee, Utah and Wyoming.

Eppleman, who is director of government markets at sales tax supplier Vertex, pointed out that some states don't tax at all and in the states that do tax, the systems vary widely from state to state. The first step, now underway with the SSTP measure, is aimed at simplifying sales tax collections across the nation.

Several members of Congress, usually those who've previously served in state governments, have indicated they will support federal legislation on remote sales tax collection, if enough states indicate they can combine to create a respectable measure of uniformity and agreement on sales taxes. With 12 states planning to carry out the voluntary taxation program beginning October 1, a threshold of about 20 percent of the nation's population could come under tax uniformity.

"Obviously there will be benefits to the states, long term," noted Eppleman. While figures vary, some studies have revealed that state and local governments are losing more than $15 billion annually in lost taxes on Internet sales. Much of the loss can be traced back to a U.S. Supreme Court decision 13 years ago, which approved a moratorium on remote sales tax collections across state lines. A reversal of that decision would pave the way for sales taxes to be collected purchases shipped across state lines.

Eppleman said a recent California court decision ordering bookseller Borders to pay back taxes on some online sales has not prompted much change in tax collecting on online sales so far. The California Court ordered Borders to pay back taxes to the state, because customers who purchased book from Borders.com returned books in the company's bricks-and-mortar locations.

EU Court Transfers Microsoft Case to Judge Panel

The European Union's second highest court has taken the Microsoft antitrust case away from the judge to whom it was originally assigned and given it to a panel of 13 judges, a court official said on Friday.

"I can confirm that the case has been moved to the Grand Chamber," said a court official, who asked not to be identified.

The official also confirmed that the panel or chamber will be headed by Court of First Instance President Bo Vesterdorf and that the case itself will be handled by Judge John Cooke.

But Judge Hubert Legal, who had been in charge of a panel of five judges handling the case, will no longer participate, the court official said. Sources have said Legal was removed, because he wrote a controversial article that angered fellow judges.

Vesterdorf had proposed a change in judges after Judge Legal created an uproar by writing a piece that used the words "ayatollahs of free

enterprise" in connection with law clerks and suggested they might have undue influence on some judges.

The European Commission found in March 2004 that Microsoft competed unfairly against rivals, fined it 497 million euros ($605 million) and ordered it to change some of its business practices.

Now the 13-judge panel will decide whether to uphold the Commission's decision or reject all or part of it.

The decision to change judges comes only a few days before the court is set to take its summer break.

In the past those familiar with the case have estimated that a change in judges may lead to a delay of anything between three months and a year beyond June, 2006, when a decision had originally been expected.

Firefox Already Ported to Mactel Platform

Apple has wasted little time establishing the groundwork for its forthcoming Intel-based Mac machines. With the help of the Mozilla Foundation, the company already has gotten the open-source Firefox Web browser to run on the "Mactel" platform.

Josh Aas, a developer for the Mozilla Foundation, wrote on a blog that Apple got Firefox running on an Intel Mac primarily as a proof-of-concept demonstration to examine the process required to port a complex application to the new platform.

Apple last month announced plans to initiate the switch to Intel chips next year, with the complete move expected in 2007.

Aas noted that Apple provided the software patches used for the Firefox demonstration, and that while the patches were outdated by the time he got them, they were "extremely valuable because they did a lot of work," pointing the Firefox developers in the right direction and alleviating the need for them to figure out certain things for themselves.

The reworked browser does have some glitches, Aas wrote, especially with certain plug-ins. Currently, only QuickTime is reliable, while most other plug-ins crash the browser. Aas said he plans to develop a fix for the problem shortly.

Forrester Research analyst Nate Root said the demonstration is noteworthy in that it shows Firefox developers are not resting on their laurels. "They are actively pushing out greater functionality and moving into new platforms, taking the fight right to Microsoft by attacking on a new front," he said.

Open-source analyst Michael Goulde, also of Forrester, offered a similar take on the development effort. "The challenge for Apple is to ease the transition for software developers, and to identify possible problems as they migrate their applications to the Mac-Intel platform," he said.

The Firefox-Apple experiment serves as a starting point in that effort, Gould said. "This shows that open source is leading the way for Macintosh developers working on new applications."

Still, while the Mac-Intel browser likely will grab the software giant's attention, said Root, Apple's new platform is a long way from completion. "This is not a serious threat to Microsoft and Explorer because Microsoft has a lock on the browser market, given that it comes with every new Wintel box," he said.

Napster, Dell In College Alliance

Dell Inc., the world's largest personal computer supplier, and Napster Inc. on Wednesday said they will provide colleges with a legal online music hardware and software package.

The offering combines Napster's digital music service with Dell's PowerEdge 1855 servers that will boost network bandwidth at schools. Colleges will be able to use the servers to store music from Napster's library locally, allowing network processing speed to remain fast while hundreds of students simultaneously download music.

The University of Washington is the first school to sign up for the package, set to launch this fall, the companies said.

This partnership will augment Napster's previous university initiative, which provided the service at 13 universities.

Under the deal, Dell will sell Napster subscriptions to additional colleges and universities at a discounted academic rate and also offer special prices on bundles that include Dell's digital music players.

The pact follows closely on the heels of last week's landmark Supreme Court ruling that found Internet file-trading networks such as Grokster and Morpheus can be held liable when their users copy music, movies and other protected works without permission.

The ruling was hailed by recording and movie companies and was considered a boost for lawful Internet businesses such as Napster, Apple Computer Inc.'s iTunes online music store and RealNetworks Inc. Rhapsody music subscription service, while it put the future of file-sharing networks such as Grokster in doubt.

Entertainment companies have been waging war on file- sharing networks for the last six years, blaming illegal copying for cutting into sales by more than 25 percent.

The entertainment industry managed to shut down Napster in its original renegade file-trading form after it introduced millions of fans to the concept of unauthorized peer-to-peer song-swapping. After undergoing several changes and owners, Napster now offers a legal music subscription service similar to Rhapsody.

IDG Offers Macworld Expo Boston 'Preview'

IDG World Expo on Thursday offered a preview of next week s Macworld Conference & Expo in Boston, Mass. The event takes place July 11 - 14, 2005

at the Hynes Convention Center.

Macworld Expo features an exhibit hall and four days of conference sessions and educational content. Highlights of the exhibit hall include the Apple Specialists Pavilion, sponsored by Apple Specialists Dealers; a free music festival from Macworld and the Berklee College of Music; new products from Quark, Xerox, Software Mackiev, Guitar Center, Harman Multimedia and others.

Feature presentations include an address from Andy Ihnatko, the MacBrainiac Challenge and the Macworld Town Hall. David Pogue s Genius Minibar is where the New York Times columnist and Mac help book author will sign books, take questions and offer advice. A Geeks and Gadgets Stage will feature free education for attendees in areas like Mac music production and iPod use.

Mac OS X Tiger education takes center-stage as well, with conference sessions dedicated to getting the most out of Mac OS X v10.4. The Power Tools Conference track features nine conferences and two days of in-depth training on specific tools and applications like Adobe s Creative Suite 2, Macromedia Flash MX 2004, FileMaker Pro, Final Cut Pro and more. The MacIT Conference includes more than 20 sessions for information technology professionals interested in getting the most out of Macs in their environment. The conference is split into four tracks: Servers and Services, Advanced User Topics, Mac OS X Troubleshooting and Mac OS X Management and Administration.

Other events include the Berklee Dream Studio, Geek My Ride video editing suite in a Lexus sedan from Tech Superpowers, Meet the Speakers meet and greet sessions and more.

High-Speed Internet Use Rises

High-speed Internet use by U.S. businesses and households rose 34 percent in 2004 to 37.9 million lines, the Federal Communications Commission said Thursday.

The figures were cited by the agency’s chairman as proof that the FCC’s broadband policy is working.

Digital subscriber line, or DSL, service increased 45 percent last year to 13.8 million lines. Cable modem use climbed 30 percent to 21.4 million lines.

Other Internet connections using wireless and satellite increased by 50 percent to 500,000 last year, the FCC said, while use of optical fiber and powerlines rose 16 percent to 700,000.

Late last year, the agency made a number of decisions designed to spur broadband deployment by easing network-sharing rules for Bell companies.

In a column published in Thursday’s Wall Street Journal, FCC Chairman Kevin Martin said broadband deployment is his "highest priority."

Critics note that the U.S. ranks as low as 16th in terms of broadband use among major countries.

Disk Storage Market Trending Up

Demand for data storage remains unabated. Regulatory compliance and an expanding small-business market are pushing sales for disk-based storage systems. Indeed, the storage market is poised for steady growth over the next several years.

Research firm IDC predicted on Wednesday that the market for storage not only will grow over the next several years, but will grow so much that there will be a wave of innovation in areas like data protection, migration and integration.

In addition, IDC's report, called "Worldwide Disk Storage Systems 2005-2009 Forecast and Analysis," predicts revenue for vendors in the storage market will jump from US$22.6 billion in 2004 to $26.3 billion in 2009.

Not enough can be said about the lasting effects of the collapse of Enron on business in the U.S. Many observers question whether post-Enron legislation, such as Sarbanes-Oxley, could ever change dishonest business people. But for the honest ones, such regulatory stipulations have created the need for secure and dependable storage software and hardware.

Specific fields, such as medicine, finance or commerce, must answer to regulators in ways not possible before the advent of widely available information technologies.

"If a hospital has to store the MRIs of every patient, it significantly increases storage needs," reminded IDC storage analyst David Reinsel.

IDC identifies virtualization as another important driver behind growth in disk-drive sales. But one sleeper - although IBM's and Microsoft's obsession with it reminds us that it is no secret - is the small and midsize business market.

As disk-drive systems drop in price and as ease of use and capabilities escalate, the small-business appetite for I.T. products will increase.

Dell is but one of many companies to benefit from demand from small businesses. IDC said the company is 4th in terms of overall disk-drive revenue, according to first-quarter data. Hewlett-Packard is the leader, followed by IBM and EMC.

IDC also said in its report that more than half of all storage shipped by 2009 will be based on "capacity-oriented" commodity drives - disks that focus on storage space rather than high performance.

Sprint Rolls Out Wireless Internet Plan

Sprint Corp. announced its arrival onto the wireless broadband scene on Thursday, more than a year and a half after one of its top rivals, Verizon Wireless, started offering broadband Internet service.

Sprint Corp. plans to provide mobile broadband service to about 150 million people by early next year. The service, using EV-DO (Evolution Data

Optimized) technology, will be available in business districts and airports in 34 markets by the end of this month. It already came online this month in 17 of those markets, including Kansas City.

The Overland Park, Kan.-based company said rates will start at $40 per month for a limited-access plan, and unlimited access will cost business customers about $80 a month.

Verizon Wireless, a joint venture between Verizon Communications Inc. and Vodafone Group PLC, began offering its EV-DO service in October 2003 in San Diego and Washington, D.C., then expanded the service into other regions soon thereafter. It currently offers its wireless broadband service in 50 markets.

Cingular Wireless offers a high-speed service using a different technology in six cities and plans to add at least 10 more markets by the end of the year.

Late last month, Sprint told The Associated Press it decided to launch its EV-DO technology in select "dense business corridors" and airports, rather than wait until it could offer the service across entire markets, because of publicity about Verizon’s expansion of its broadband service.

But on Thursday, Oliver Valente, Sprint’s chief technology officer, said the company wanted to wait to offer the service until the required devices were broadly available. Valente said Sprint’s immersion into high-speed wireless service was "timed differently than some of the competition. We think we’re at the right point and right time with deployment."

"They (Verizon) certainly launched theirs first; there’s no denying that," said John Polivka, a spokesman for Sprint. "We announced last June we would develop EV-DO by this point in time, and indeed we have done so. We will have substantially closed the gap by the end of this year."

Lisa Pierce, vice president of Forrester Research Inc., said Thursday that Sprint’s announcement means Verizon no longer has such a stranglehold on wireless broadband.

"It introduces competition into the market, which is always a good thing," Pierce said. "It looks like Sprint’s initial geographical deployment is very limited in metro areas and will be filled out over time."

She said one of the big questions now is whether Sprint’s new offering will influence Cingular’s deployment of its own broadband service, which uses technology called UMTS.

Pierce said she expects Sprint to catch up with Verizon in the number of wireless broadband users in the first quarter, depending on how much Verizon expands its markets by then.

"Anybody who’s been on the new, faster services, they don’t want to go back to the slower ones," Pierce said.

Sprint said EV-DO has average download speeds of 400 to 700 kilobits per second, which is comparable to entry-level DSL and cable broadband services. It’s slower than Wi-Fi connections, but it gives users more flexibility because they can get online anywhere there’s a cellular signal. Wi-Fi signals can travel only several hundred feet.

Wireless companies see mobile internet access as one of the more promising

growth areas. Valente said Sprint has seen a sharp rise in the number of downloads, photos shared and ringtones purchased by wireless users in the past year.

"That, coupled with the fact that 70 percent of the market has not yet purchased mobile content, in our view, is indicative of the tremendous growth opportunities for wireless services, and we will continue to capitalize on our leadership position," he said.

Famed HP Garage Returning To Glory

Ken Hendrickson hoisted the weathered wooden boards Thursday and, one by one, hammered history back into place.

Slowly, the famous Hewlett-Packard garage - dismantled in the spring for a preservation project - took shape.

For the past year, HP has been restoring the Palo Alto home that birthed both the company and Silicon Valley’s garage start-up culture. While the two-story house is the most labor-intensive portion of the yearlong project, it’s the simple 12-by-18-foot garage that is being the most tenderly preserved.

The garage was the reason Bill Hewlett decided to rent the Addison Avenue property in 1938. He needed a spot that he and his friend, David Packard, could transform into a lab and workshop.

The Professorville home was "A-number-1," Hewlett assured Packard in a letter. He paid $45 rent to hold it.

The young engineers divided the garage into two sections: the left side for design and the right for manufacturing. The table saw sat outside.

It was here the duo built their company’s first major products: audio-oscillators, which the young inventors famously sold to Disney to use in the production of "Fantasia." Once Hewlett and Packard could afford to hire two employees, the garage became too small, and the company moved to Page Mill Road.

It’s that history that draws techcolytes to the garage and won it state landmark status in 1987. It is such a cultural touchstone that in April HP officials decided to hang a blue tarp during the rehabilitation to hide the garage, which was stripped down to its frame.

"We weren’t sure how upset people would be to see how struck down it was," said Anna Mancini, HP’s archivist.

Carpenters tucked a steel frame alongside the old wood one to strengthen the garage. They poured new concrete footings and trimmed the bottoms of termite-bitten boards. Crews saved what wood they could; 80 percent of the wood must be original for the property to qualify as federally historic, a designation HP hopes to eventually win. Additional boards came from an old barn in Woodside.

On Thursday, the garage began taking shape again. Hendrickson and Jimmy Reyes did it old school, gripping nails in their mouths and hammers in their hands. Nail guns are quicker, Hendrickson said, but human care was

needed for each of the 52 Douglas fir boards, which were rough-sawn and weathered by the decades.

Some pieces had shrunk. Some had swelled. Some had done both. Hendrickson marveled that so many pieces had survived the years.

The project is special to him. His father-in-law was HP’s first welder, he said. Hendrickson’s wife, Paulette, who stops by the site frequently, worked there, too.

Many people with HP ties were sentimental Thursday watching the fabled structure take shape.

"It gives me goose bumps," said Sid Espinosa, HP’s manager of public relations.

HP’s employees have intently followed the restoration’s progress, and the updates have received the second-most hits on the company Web site, officials said, behind only to the company’s CEO shuffle earlier this year.

"These are community treasures, especially for the company," Espinosa said. "It embodies our history and our culture."

HP hopes to finish the entire project - the garage, the house and the shed where Hewlett slept - this fall.

After the board and batten are in place, crews will install the cedar shingle roof, rehang the doors and add green paint to the trim. Mancini plans to re-create the lab and has been scouring eBay and yard sales for items like oscillators.

"Oops! I need to take more pictures," she said, stopping conversation to again stare at the garage’s steady progress. "This is a big day."

More Computer Classes Urged for Kids

Even in a nation where most every school has Internet access and computer use often starts by nursery school, teachers of technology see a warning message flashing.

For students in elementary and secondary schools, states have few developed standards or required courses in computer science - a field that goes beyond basic literacy to encompass hardware and software design, real-world applications and computers’ effect on society.

Such lean coursework means that many students don’t have the chance to study the science of computers until college, where a declining number are majoring in the subject. Somehow, teachers contend, states must embrace the idea of training sophisticated computer users at a younger age.

The sell isn’t easy. Computer science, like other subjects, is fighting for time on student schedules and a place on the political agenda, where reading and math dominate.

"Students don’t have to take our classes, it’s only an option," said Jim Lindberg, who teaches computer software applications to high school

students in Tacoma, Wash. "Some kids, for whatever reason, are missing the opportunity to at least take a bite out of the class, to see what it's all about ... They would use the skills they learn for the rest of their lives."

Technology teachers spoke to The Associated Press during a group interview at the annual meeting of the National Education Association, the country's largest teachers union.

Mike Brown, an instructional supervisor for Robertson County Schools in Springfield, Tenn., said more high school students should be learning programming, Web site management or graphics. Instead, they take basic keyboarding and graduate without much computer savvy, he said.

The same students who can customize their cell phones expertly need to see how computer science benefits them, he said: "If you can show them that, then they're going to jump on it."

Yet computer science teachers say they're facing a perception that careers in the field are harder to come by since the dot.com collapse a few years ago. Federal job forecasts contradict that notion, and careers from criminology to biology often demand advanced computer training.

In the United States, the number of bachelor's degrees in computer and information sciences soared 91 percent from 1997 to 2002, during the tech boom. Recently, however, the popularity of computer science as a major for incoming freshmen has plummeted, falling more than 60 percent between 2000 and 2004, according to the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA.

Meanwhile, technology executives have told Congress they are increasingly relying on employees from overseas and clamoring for more U.S. graduates with stronger science skills.

The fastest growing jobs through 2012 include data communications analysts, health information technicians and computer software engineers, according to the Labor Department.

Other developments show why advocates are worried.

The number of computer science teachers dropped slightly in 2005 for the first time in years, according to Market Data Retrieval, which annually surveys schools districts.

Even the Advanced Placement Program has seen a declining number of students take its yearly tests in computer science, bucking a trend in which most every AP subject is booming.

Lindberg, the Washington teacher, has integrated reading and math into his class and helped teachers in other departments see how to better use technology. "It's almost a survival mechanism, but we're showing the 'academic' teachers that what we teach is valuable," he said.

Glenn Fernandez, an elementary school technology coordinator in Honolulu, Hawaii, helps students learn desktop publishing, spreadsheets and other tasks by sixth grade. But some schools can't afford such programs, or they lose funding for subjects required for graduation, he said. If the teachers only know word processing, he said, "that's all their class is going to get."

And that's not enough, said Chris Stephenson, executive director of the

Computer Science Teachers Association, a newly formed advocacy group. The nation needs students who are prepared to develop software, design hardware, program languages and manage databases, she said. The association is promoting a model curriculum that integrates computer science through every grade.

"We need to get (students) to the level of creating original works with their skills," Stephenson said. "We want to see a generation of tool builders, not just tool users, because tool builders have the economic power in the world."

On The Net:

Computer Science Teachers Association: http://www.csta.acm.org/

National Education Association: http://www.nea.org

Bureau of Labor Statistics: http://www.bls.gov/emp/emptab3.htm

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